

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN STEVEN LATOURETTE
RAILROAD SUBCOMMITTEE
HEARING ON
HUMAN FACTORS ISSUES IN RAIL SAFETY
JULY 25, 2006**

Good morning. This Subcommittee hearing will come to order. I want to welcome all of our Members and witnesses to today's hearing on the subject of Human Factors Issues in Rail Safety.

Working the rails can be a difficult and dangerous job. The men and women of our nation's railroads work outdoors in the blistering heat of summer and in the frigid cold of winter. Whether through mountain blizzards or coastal storms, the trains must go through.

Our nations railroads run twenty four hours a day, three hundred sixty five days a year. Railroad

employees must often work through the night, or on weekends, or on holidays. Overtime work is the norm on many of our major railroads.

This grueling schedule can have an impact on public safety. Many railroad accidents have been attributed to employee fatigue, including accidents involving major loss of life.

The work schedules of railroad employees is governed by the Hours of Service Act, a law dating back to 1907 when the railroads still ran steam engines.

The purpose of today's hearing is to revisit the Hours of Service Act in the light of new medical discoveries, with due regard to the demands and responsibilities placed on employees in today's railroad operating environment.

Before yielding to Ms. Brown I have one brief housekeeping item.

I would like to request Unanimous Consent to allow thirty days for Members to revise and extend their remarks and to permit the submission of additional statements and materials by Members and witnesses.

Without Objection.

I now yield to Ms. Brown for any opening statement she may have.